





Home JEC Asia Business Review Issue 11 - April 2018

Interview of Mr. Danu Chotikapanich CEO of Cobra & President of the Thai Composites Association (TCA)

JEC Asia Business Review: The Composites industrial sector in Thailand is particularly active. What are the differences between the local demand/production and exports?

Danu Chotikapanich: First of all, I should emphasize that we have, in Thailand a very strong composites industry, mainly manufacturers that I shall call fabricators. They manufacture products for the local Thai market, but also export to regional markets such as the CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam), to South East Asia on a larger scale and also to the rest of the world.

The local fabricators are relatively small sized companies (SME) and are present in many industrial sectors such as:

• construction & building at large, but also with gas station structures or seats for stadiums, etc.

• tubes & tanks (for electrical infrastructures, chemicals or water)

- marine, with fishing and tourism boats
 These products are fabricated for the local Thai market and/or exported regionally; automotive, mainly for the after-market (spoilers, different parts for tuning, etc.)
 These products are used on the local Thai market but also exported regionally and in South East Asia.
- temporary structures (for events, decoration, etc.)
- products for the home such as doors or furniture. A case in point is Element 26, a Bangkok based company which is producing contemporary fiberglass design products and exporting outside Asia
- leisure products : swimming pools, which are mainly used in Thailand; music instruments (drums)

As far as exporting companies are concerned, they are mostly foreign; investing in Thailand and are rather large. Here are a few:

The largest composites player in Thailand with a 2,300 people workforce is Cobra, a Thai company founded 40 years ago. It is famous for its watersport equipment like windsurfing boards (50% of the worldwide market). It also addresses markets like Marine, Automotive, Motorcycle, Aviation, Architecture,





Construction and Luxury goods.

Aditya Birla Chemicals (an Indian company) an epoxy resin producer has a large plant in Chonburi, Thailand.

In the leisure business sector you can also count with **Firewire** - a U.S. company – producing and exporting surfboards. And other fabricators for helmets, bicycles, boats (racing, catamarans, etc.).

In the automotive sector the main player is **Toray Carbon Magic** (the Japanese company acquired Dome Carbon Magic in 2014) which manufactures auto parts but also some aerospace products.

Aeroworks Composites B.V. (from the Netherlands) is dedicated to innovative aerospace products, aircraft seats in particular.

Triumph Structures (Thailand) Ltd. offers composites parts for the aerospace industries.

JABR: Could you name prominent activities where Thai composites are at their best ? And why?

Danu Chotikapanich: Generally speaking, all composites products made in Thailand are well known for their very good quality. Why is it so? Because we have in our country experienced and highly skilled workers.

For example, the prepreg process being very demanding, excellent craftsmen are requested. This is why Cobra, Aeroworks, Toray, as well as several French companies are successful with prepreg products made in Thailand.

The other reason why composites are successful in this country is because our infrastructures, roads and affordable construction for instance, are good. Foreign investors like this kind of combination between this environment and the highly qualified Thai workforce. In addition, bear in mind that Thailand is an open country and they are most welcome here!

JABR: In the next 3 years, what is the sector which will record the strongest progression?

Danu Chotikapanich: In fact, two sectors are booming in Thailand.

Automotive, with a strong and steady growth, with different manufacturing processes across the board. No less than two million cars are annually produced in Thailand, by German, Japanese and U.S. automakers. That's a lot of parts...! Moreover, the motorcycle industry is present with brands like Ducati and Triumph, plus many Japanese bikes.

Building & Construction, which is a fast growing sector with many innovations coming to market, initiated by small and large companies like Cobra which recently formed a new department exclusively dedicated for Composites Structures.

Other sectors have a good growth rate but these two activities are really leading the composites business in Thailand.

→ RETURN TO JEC ASIA BUSINESS REVIEW #11











